

English Grammar

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On and off mention has been made on the English auxiliaries and the copulas, it is in order then to offer some details on the matter, at least presumably those aspects which might be relevantly relating to the understanding of Hebrew vav-prefixed verbs. By its nature English is a language that is sensitive to tense, mood and aspect in its verb formation via conjugation while the number (singular and plural) of the verb is confined to the present tense in contrast to the past tense and the future tense, where unlike Hebrew, English would not carry such information. Verbs in English do not indicate gender since it is done in the pronouns when one functioned as the subject of the sentence and carried the burden of this task.

14.2 The Infinitives

The Infinitive is the base form of the verb across many languages. There are two Infinitives in the English grammar: the Full Infinitive (also known as the supine) and the bare infinitive or, in some English grammar books, known as the plain verb. Unlike the Hebrew word: לכתב, for instance, the English Full Infinitive carried the preposition “to” in front of the verb but not prefixed to it, for example: *to go*, *to come*, *to fetch*, *to walk*, hence the Full Infinitive is also known as *to*-Infinitive

in some books. A verb without the preposition *to*—only the plain, naked verb—is the bare infinitive such as: *go, come, fetch*, and others.

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Not totally identical though, the English full infinitive is closely resembled the Hebrew infinitive construct and even sharing some similar functions such as the substantive and the predicative use of the infinitive, to express a purpose, and so on. Feature common to the bare infinitive and the infinitive absolute is rather obvious but both assume different tasks. The English plain-word infinitive is used as the imperative and jussive while in Hebrew that role is performed by the infinitive construct with or without the preposition [לְ] (lamedh) although the same task as imperative could be performed by the Hebrew Infinitive Absolute; (chapters seven and eight). The English bare infinitive forms an intrinsic part of the modal verbs, for example: *If Deborah could sing, Jehu would have married her*. Also, the English bare infinitive is used as the plural form in the present tense while the English past and English future do not display information on singular or plural of the verb, but not so in Hebrew where verbs across the tenses must indicate either plural or singular by way of verbal pronominal sufformatives.

14.4 The Participles

The Participles are derived via conjugation from the corpus of verbs, which are of two

Conjugation of the English verb						
full infinitive (the supine)	bare infinitive (only the plain verb)	Simple Past—ed	Past Participle—ed (except the irregular verbs)	Present Participle +—ing	Simple Present —s/es → singular; —bare infinitive → plural	Simple Future will / shall
to abide	abide	abided	abided	abiding	abides/abide	will abide
to call	call	called	called	calling	calls/call	will call
to die	die	died	died	dying	dies/die	will die
to walk	talk	talked	talked	talking	talks/talk	will talk
to be	be	was/were	been	being	is/am/are	will be
to have	have	had	had	having	has/have	will have
to do	do	did	done	doing	does/do	will do

broad categories, namely, the regular and irregular verbs (the strong verbs). To conjugate a participle, the verbal suffixes, that is, /—ed/ for English past participle; /—ing/ for English present participle would be consistently added to the bare infinitive to configure the participles: the past participle or the present participle, for example, to walk, walk → walked, walking, and so on.

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All verbs, with the exception of somewhere two hundred odd irregular verbs, would affix the verbal suffix /—ed/ to form the Simple Past (the Preterite) and the Past Participle, for example: to call → called; to die → died while all other verbs, with no exception, receive /—ing/ as the Present Participle, to reiterate: to call → calling; to walk → walking to compose the continuous tenses. Apart from the Simple Past of the regular verbs, the English Past Participle is also used to form the Passive, the Perfect Tense as well as copulative passive, for an idea of it: *The window was broken*. The irregular verbs are by default given a past participle of its own for each verb, to evince the point: go → went → gone; run → ran → run, along with other.

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Both the Infinitives and the Participles, across languages, are not full verbs—not the finite verbs. By the nature and logic of its dynamic, both of these, the infinitives and the participles, could be used as adjective, noun, adverb and to form part of a verb/tense phrase.

A sample:

- a. He refused to talk to me.
- b. The deceased was my English teacher.
- c. Swimming in the Nile was risky.
- d. To err is human, to forgive divine.
- e. He likes cooking for his folks.
- f. He likes to cook for his folks
- g. He was swimming in the river when the crocodile came.

The English Simple Tenses		
Simple Past	Simple Present	Simple Future
John went to Ashqelon yesterday.	John works in a bank. (in habitual action/general truth -- time-clause might be omitted)	I will come to see you in En Gedi tomorrow.

- h. The field was wet this morning as it had been raining for hours since yesterday evening.
- i. He has been playing guitar ever since he was a teenager.

14.7 The Simple Tense

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The element of exact time, implied time or known time, such as *yesterday*, *at dawn*, *in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah*, and so on, known as time-clause, is essential if the sentence or the independent clause is a one-word verb speaks on a single action, a habitual action or general truth in the English Simple Tenses: Simple Past; Simple Present; Simple Future, often overlaying merely expressing a habitual action—either regularly or irregularly—repetitive or recurrent action which could be a general truth, that is, matters or actions believed to be always true or not true, covering non-repetitive event or once in a life time happening, as in this: *John died in a road accident two years*

The English Simple Tense vs. non-Simple Tense	
Simple Tense (with exact time highlighting the main verb)	non-Simple Tense (with no exact time for the main action)
→ one-word verb or a single action in an independent clause or sentence; → time-clause—exact time or implied time of the action—is essential, except sentences expressing a repetitive, habitual action or a general truth, eg. a. <i>John works in a bank.</i> b. <i>John went to see his grandmother yesterday evening.</i> c. <i>I will come to see you in the office tomorrow.</i>	→ multiple actions or a series of actions, usually involving a process which entails either a known beginning time, a known ending moment, or the action is suspending in the middle or on the progressive in relation to an overarching time frame, i.e., from the onset of the whole spectrum of the chain of actions in relationship to the speech moment; → speech moment refers to the perspective or the position in time when the speaking or conversation, usually a dialogue, takes place; → the rule of sequence of tenses apply; eg. <i>We have been busy taking dancing class to prepare for the nuptials.</i> eg. <i>John was swimming in the river when the crocodile came yesterday/this morning.</i>

ago; I will come to your office tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. Thus here lies the meaning of the concept of tense in grammar, which in essence expresses the time or the moment of the action of the verb purportedly to have or would have taken place, usually in a known time context of that particular action which underpins its appearance of punctiliar and perfective quality. Often than not, sentences involving the use of the copulas would be in the simple tense format. Adverbs of frequency with or without the exact time, such as *always, often, usually, seldom, never, once in a while, from time to time*, and such wise, would be used in irregular action. To give an idea: *My brother and I usually swim in the Arnon River on Sundays.* Verbs in a sentence do not require the expression of an exact time would not fall under the purview of the simple tense: They belong to the non-Simple Tense.

14.8 The non-Simple Tense

In the scheme of things, there are four (counting the simple tense as well) aspects distributed along three tenses: the Past; the Present; the Future. The aspects made good use of the participles, two of them: the Present Participle and the Past Participle shadowing the auxiliaries to complete the whole system of the English tense. These tenses come under the realm of non-simple tense when there is no indication of an exact time immediately linked to the main verb. That is not very tense after all!

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14.9 The Modal Auxiliary Verbs

English has a consistent scheme of auxiliary and the semi-auxiliary (quasi-auxiliary also known as lexical auxiliary). These verbs help to express

English Modal Verbs		
can	could	+bare infinitive → can sing; could sing, etc
shall	should	+bare infinitive → shall sing; should sing, etc
will	would	+bare infinitive → will sing; would sing, etc
may	might	+bare infinitive → may sing; might sing, etc
must	(no tense for must)	+bare infinitive → must sing, etc.
ought	ought + come	+full infinitive → ought to go, etc

possibility, ability, permission, necessity or contingency are known as modal verbs (also called modal auxiliary verbs), working in tandem with the main verb in its supine or bare infinitive form. Classification placed the semi-auxiliary verbs as subcategory under the modal verbs. The auxiliaries are: verb *to be*, verb *to have*, verb *to do*, and the modal verbs (can, could; will, would; shall, should; may, might; must, ought + supine, that is, the full infinitive); and the semi-auxiliaries: *dare* (as bare infinitive), *need* (as bare infinitive), *used* + full infinitive, namely, *used* (+ supine, e.g. *We used to eat in that restaurant during school recess*); *Moses used to swim in the Nile when he lived in Egypt*. The modal verbs will and shall are employed in the formation of the English Future Tense.

14.10 Sequence of Tenses

. 14.6. On top of that there is the rule of sequence of tenses, which is deemed paramount in English grammar for it dictates that the tense of the subordinate clause must be compatibly matching with the tense of the main, independent clause. This feature holds sway particularly in sentences expressing multiple actions or a series of actions or a chain of it where the use of the pluperfect might be prominent, particularly so when translating Hebrew vav-prefixed verbs into English.

14.11 The Auxiliary of Verb *to be*

Verb *to be* (also known as copular verbs or link verbs), one among the auxiliary verbs, helps to link between the subject noun and the predicate, thus the helping verb comes on to the stage. Generally, the verb *to be*, in whatever form it might be (to be, be, was/were, is/am/are, been, being), is used in a sentence which meaning falls under any of the category of situation, condition, quality, general truth, relationship and availability, often overlapping in semantic domain, particularly situation, condition and quality. When not engaging in the composition of continuous tense, the copula in an independent clause or sentence is in a simple tense form; and consistently so. Thus, the verb *to be* holds a broader portfolio of function in English, a feature that is not found in many other languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Mandarin (partially), Malay, Russian, and the like, in sentences of similar semantic categories. These languages do not utilise the verb *to be*, hence zero copula, at least not as

profusely used as English or as some other Indo-European languages. So much so that when sentences do not engage the copula of verb *to be* to create a semantic link between the subject and the predicate, these languages—Hebrew is such a language—extensively enlist adjectives to perform the ostensibly linking task; similar observation is also noted in languages such as Mandarin, Russian and the like.

A small sample to stress the points:

Example in English	Similar sentence in the Bible	
The room is empty.	וַיִּקְחֵהוּ—וַיִּשְׁלֹכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבֵּרָה; וְהַבּוֹר רֵק, אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם.	24 and they took him, and cast him into the pit—and the pit <i>was</i> empty, there <i>was</i> no water in it. (Literary: and the cistern dry; no in it water) Genesis 37:24
Why are you angry ?	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן: לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ, וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָנֶיךָ.	And the LORD said unto Cain: ‘Why <i>art</i> thou wroth? and why <i>is</i> thy countenance fallen? Genesis 4:6
I am a rose of Sharon	אֲנִי חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׂרוֹן, שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים.	I <i>am</i> a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. Song of Songs 2:1
She is my English teacher.	וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ, אַחֲתִי הִיא; וַיִּשְׁלַח, אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ גֵּרָר, וַיִּקַּח, אֶת-שָׂרָה.	And Abraham said of Sarah his wife: ‘She <i>is</i> my sister.’ And Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. Genesis 20:2

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The verb *to be* is absent in these sentences in the Hebrew text and thus the English translation inserted the copula in meeting the requirement of English grammar. To stress once more, there are languages in the world that no link verb or copula is needed when sentences seek to express similar category of meaning. Hebrew is such a language. In English, the verb *to be* when precedes a present participle, it expresses a sense of continuity or in the middle of an action, for instance: *John is singing on the coconut tree*. The tense of the verb *to be* determines the tense of the whole sentence: Not the participle, which offers merely a qualified or an attributed meaning to the action; and in such cases the rule of sequence of tenses must apply, for example: *John was swimming in the river when the*

crocodile came.

14.12 The Passive

The Passive voice in grammar speaks about a situation without reference to the cause or the triggering doer or actor of the action, which in a usual sentence functions as the subject of the sentence but not so in passive, for example: *The window was broken*. Here, the copula is pairing with a past participle, depicting the situation or condition or quality of the window but without reference to the

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The continuous/progressive tense			
→ composition — verb <i>to be</i> + present participle; → the tense of the verb <i>to be</i> determines the tense of the whole sentence; → denotes an action suspending in the middle of a plane or process or part of a series of actions without reference to the beginning time or the ending time of the action in relationship to the speech moment. → Stative verbs are not used in making the continuous tense and the perfect continuous tense;			
types of continuous/progressive tense	The past continuous/progressive tense	The present continuous/progressive tense	the future continuous/progressive tense
Examples: unknown beginning and unknown ending	John was watching the news on YouTube when the monkey slipped into the kitchen	The children are going to school.	I will be staying at my place this evening.

cause of it, thus a passive voice construction has occurred. The widow could not break by itself; some unknown cause or person or doer did it but that unknown cause or person is not mentioned as the subject of the sentence. Incidentally, the English passive voice is used more frequently in formal articulation.

14.13 The Auxiliary Verb *to be* and the Continuous Tense

The English continuous tense or also known as the progressive tense (three of them: the past continuous/progressive; the present continuous/progressive; the future continuous/progressive) recruits the verb *to be* with the present participle in its composition, for example: *John was reading the Torah when the prophet died*. The sentence depicted the action was caught up in the middle of a process while another action took place simultaneously. Whereas the verb *to have* is

used with the past participle to form the perfect tense (three of them: the past perfect; the present perfect; the future perfect) to negotiate the process or the chain of actions at three distinctive intervals: the beginning, the middle and the end of the action or after its terminus in relationship to the speech time.

14.14 The Continuous tense and the Stative Verbs

Stative verbs are verbs that describe a state or situation in the mind: An action that would usually happen in the mind of the speaker, such as, *believe, agree, disagree, mind, remember, like, dislike, recognise, see, want, hate, need, understand, know, contain, consist, love, hope, include, prefer, depend, owe*, and so on, some two hundred odd of them in English: more or less about the same quantity believably could be in circulation in other languages. In English, these verbs would not be used in the continuous tense, including the perfect continuous tense. To illustrate: *I do not know him*; but not **I am not knowing him*. The stative verbs might imbricate with some irregular verbs and could be intransitive in nature. A small number of the stative verbs could serve as a dynamic verb and a stative verb, having dual nature, for instance: verb *to do, to have* and *to be*. As a matter of convenience, the stative verbs could be grouped under some broad categories: emotion, perception, possession and or mental state. Generally, the natural meaning of a word governs its grammar.

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14.15 The Auxiliary of Verb to have

Compare:

1 Samuel 1:2	וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים	And he had two wives:
1 Samuel 25:2	וְלוֹ צֹאן שְׁלֹשֶׁת-אַלְפִים, וְאֶלֶף עֲזִים;	and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats;
Genesis 18:10	וַיֹּאמֶר, שׁוּב אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה, וְהִנֵּה-בֵן, לְשָׂרָה אִשְׁתְּךָ; וְשָׂרָה פָתַח שְׁמַעַת הָאֵהָל, וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו.	And He said: 'I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.

In the original Hebrew there is no verb *to have* for the role of possessive in these sentences, unless the whole construction of וְלוֹ (vav conjunction + preposition [לְ]) (lamedh) and third masculine singular (הוּא) (he) is taken as such and that וְלוֹ is literally meant *and for him / to him*. Stretching it a step further, it could make up for the sense of *and by him; and for him / to him two wives*. In the English translation the verb *to have* is inserted in response to the requirement of English grammar to express the idea of possession or ownership. Similar observation could be made out of 1 Samuel 25:2 that there is no possessive use of the verb *to have* in Hebrew grammar as the way English does.

14.16 The Auxiliary Verb *to have* and the Perfect Tense

. 14.10. The non-Simple Tense (three of them: the perfect tense; the continuous/progressive; the perfect continuous/progressive tense) is used mostly in dependent clause of multiple actions happening simultaneously or in succession one after the other involving the use of auxiliary of verb *to be* and auxiliary of verb *to have*. While not speaking an exact time, the non-simple tense would be denoting a process, namely, at which position or locale of the action of the verb: (i) a known beginning or commencement of the action but unknown ending (the perfect continuous/progressive tense) plus the beginning time of the action, frequently engaging adverbs such since, from, a period of time, etc.; (b) suspending in the middle of an on-going action without reference to both its beginning or ending (the continuous tense); (c) a known ending or a known terminus without reference to its beginning while having a subterranean link with another action (the perfect tense). These non-Simple Tense could rather be more suitably understood as aspects, such as the perfect aspects, and in similar fashion.

14.18 Transitive verbs and Intransitive verbs

Intransitive verbs are verbs that would not take an object. Some intransitive verbs could be dynamic verbs but a good number of them are stative and irregular verbs overlappingly, at least that is so in the English language. The intransitive verbs are usually not found in a huge number in any given language, a merely few hundred in English or as about the same amount as

The perfect tense			
→ composition — verb <i>to have</i> + past participle; → the tense of the verb <i>to have</i> determines the tense of the whole sentence; → denotes an action with an unknown beginning or its commencement but a known ending—after a known terminus, a posterior, in reference to another subterranean action in relation to the speaking moment.			
types of perfect tense	The past perfect tense	The present perfect tense	the future perfect tense
Examples: unknown beginning but known ending—after a terminus, to the verb.	They had moved to Jerusalem last summer. (<i>The overarching time frame is well over a year before last summer</i>)	John has gone to the washroom. (<i>John's presence in the office came to an end—a terminus</i>)	Abraham will have married Sarah by next Christmas.

the irregular verbs. A random list of these verbs in the bare infinitive: *run, lie, sing, sleep, cough, emerge, happen, laugh, die, mourn, respond, agree, arrive, go, become, belong, consist*, and many more. Looking at these verbs, the silhouette of vav-prefixed verbs is visible at the distant background, not all analogous though. In French intransitive verbs are preceded by *être* in the formation of the perfect tense (*passé composé*),

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The perfect continuous tense			
→ composition — verb <i>to have</i> + past participle of verb <i>to be</i> (been) + present participle; → Stative verbs are not used in making the continuous tense and the perfect continuous tense; → the tense of the verb <i>to have</i> determines the tense of the whole sentence → denotes an action with a known beginning or commencement but without its ending time howbeit with a reference to another subterranean action in relation to the speaking moment.			
types of perfect continuous tense	The past perfect continuous tense	The present perfect continuous tense	the future perfect continuous/ tense
Examples: known beginning but unknown ending time to the verb.	They had been talking for over an hour before John arrived.	He has been teaching in this seminary for two years.	By the end of next year John will have been teaching Hebrew here for four years.

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Words involved in the formation of Hebrew vav-prefixed verbs are mostly verbs of motion or action extending from the human body or body movement, intransitive and or stative verbs—a hasty remark perhaps. A small sample of these verbs of motion or body movement, not exhaustive for sure, such as: *bend, lift, carry, kneel, sit, hold, leap, pick up, pull, come, go, push, exist, run, depart, go out, leave, lean, throw, kiss, clap, laugh, stretch out, walk, scurry, stagger, roll, sway, look, cry, lie down, stand, break, talk, open, cut out, clap*, and the like. Not a full treatment of the subject intended, a quick glimpse nonetheless into the dynamic of vav-prefixed verbs in Hebrew, especially the choice of tenses in the potential implication on the understanding and translation of Hebrew into English would be insightful; and probably also into other languages as well.

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